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SUBJECT: DEBY PEACE ACCORD WITH FUC'S NOUR -- ONE LESS  
REBEL GROUP IN THE FRAY

Classified By: POLOFF DAN VERNON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: The withdrawal of Sudanese government support and an alleged payment of \$5.5 million from Libyan President Moammar Gadaffi may have combined to induce Chadian rebel leader Mahamat Nour to sign a peace agreement with the Deby government in Tripoli December 24. The significance of the accord appears to be largely symbolic in military terms as the FUC was largely a spent force from heavy losses during its failed assault on N'Djamena last April and from subsequent defections to other rebel groups. Although battered by the Chadian Army in last month's fighting, other rebel groups appear to be nursing their wounds and readying themselves to renew the fight within months. End summary.

The Peace Accord  
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¶2. (U) GOC infrastructure minister, Adoum Younousmi and United Front for Change (FUC) leader Mahamat Nour signed a peace agreement December 24 that provides for an immediate cessation of combat, release of all prisoners, an amnesty for FUC fighters and their cantonment pending integration into ANT within three months of the signing of the agreement, FUC representation in the government and a one-month window for FUC "allies" to join the accord. Representatives of the AU, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Congo, Egypt, Eritrea and Sudan witnessed the signing in Tripoli. Nour returned to N'Djamena with President Deby and attended the sixteenth anniversary celebration of Deby's 1990 assumption of power on December 29.

What brought Mohamat Nour to the Table  
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¶3. (C) There are varying interpretations of Nour's motives in agreeing to the peace deal. Mahamoud Bechir, Chad's Ambassador in Washington told Ambassador January 5 that Khartoum's decision to withdraw support for Nour was behind his decision to throw in the towel and join with Deby while Abdelwahid Yacoub, a former embassy political assistant and current national representative of FEWSNET (Famine Early Warning System Network), told embassy officer January 4 that the peace agreement was largely driven by Mouammar Gadaffi who paid Nour \$5.5 million to sign the accord.

Nour,s FUC a spent force  
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¶4. (C) Abdelwahid Yacoub described Nour as a spent force with few options. He said Nour was a strong, but militarily incompetent rebel leader who, because of his incompetence, never posed a military threat to the Deby regime. Nour's April attack on N'djamena was tactical folly. Nour rounded up his fighters in the East and traveled secondary roads to N'djamena with no regard to adequacy of supply lines, reinforcement or the consequences of failure. As a result,

his ranks were gutted in a failed "suicidal" attack. Nour lacked substance, he was "never serious and will never be serious," Yacoub concluded.

#### Deby,s Motives

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¶15. In contrast, Yacoub said Deby was clever, and would try to implement the provisions of the peace accord to good advantage. Having Nour in the tent as a minister would remove him from his fighters; integrating his fighters into the Chadian Army, and then dispersing them in units throughout the country, would neutralize them as a threat. Yacoub added that Deby also derived immediate benefits from the accord in that Nour's fighters had now assumed a role in protecting the Ouadifira region border with Sudan from attacks by other rebel groups.

¶16. (C) If Nour comes into the Deby government, Yacoub believed that he would seek to rally political support in order to challenge Deby, but dismissed his prospects of success -- without "fighters, he is nothing." Yacoub alleged that other adversaries with whom Deby had reconciled were ultimately murdered.

¶17. (C) In the meantime, the UFDD and RaFD response to the December reversals is their announced intention to coordinate military operations. During his January 5 meeting with the Ambassador, Bechir described a secret agreement reached between RaFD leader Timan Erdimi and UFDD leader Mahamat Nouri to allow Nouri to become president and Erdimi vice president when (or if) they take power in N'Djamena. The agreement, however, was said to be "secret," because Erdimi knows that many of his supporters would never agree to such

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an arrangement. While they are prepared to coordinate their military operations with Nouri, they would never tolerate him in the presidency. Erdimi is nonetheless ready to work with Nouri because he knows he can't win on his own. As for Nouri, Bechir said Deby has asked Gadaffi to help arrange a rapprochement, but Nouri has thus far refused the overtures. In Bechir's view, he is completely manipulated by Khartoum and continues to receive their full support.

¶18. (C) Comment: Formed in late 2005, Nour's rebel group was badly mauled during the FUC's failed assault on N'Djamena in April 2006. His ranks were further depleted by defections to the Erdimi brothers' Rally of Democratic Forces (RaFD) and other rebel groups. As recently as mid-November, the Chief of Defense claimed that the FUC was still the largest rebel group with between 2,000 to 3,000 fighters. Current estimates of a remnant of some 600 to 800 fighters suggests that the FUC represented a much reduced threat to the regime. Combined with the Chadian Army's successes in December against UFDD (Union of Forces for Democracy) and RaFD forces, the overall rebel threat appears to have diminished to a point that it may be several months before new offensives can be mounted. End comment.

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